

(Fort Lauderdale, FL) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) made the following statement in response to U.S. District Judge Roger Vinson's recent ruling regarding the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. The Northern District of Florida judge declared the so-called "individual mandate" and, by extension, the entire law, unconstitutional. Judge Vinson's decision contradicts 14 other court rulings, the opinion of over 100 law professors, and several recent polls showing narrow support by Americans for full repeal of the health care reform law.

"Try as some may to repeal the Affordable Care Act, I strongly believe that making prescription drugs more affordable for seniors, helping small businesses provide health insurance to their employees through tax credits, and preventing insurance companies from denying or limiting care is what the American people need and deserve.

"Judge Vinson's ruling is flawed on multiple counts. Not only did he ignore decades of established Supreme Court law by declaring the entire health care reform law null and void, but it is it well within Congress' constitutional authority to regulate economic activity under the Commerce Clause, the Necessary and Proper Clause, and the General Welfare Clause.

"The decision not to purchase health insurance is an economic decision in itself that affects us as a whole. Each and every single day, millions of uninsured individuals access health care services, and these costs become everyone's costs in the form of higher premiums and taxes.

"In order to make affordable, quality health care more accessible for all Americans, we must take responsibility for our own health insurance. In fact, the majority of Americans are already doing this. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that only 1 percent of all Americans will pay a penalty in 2016 as a result of the 'individual responsibility' requirement.

"Rather than preserve the many patient protections, benefits, and cost savings under the Affordable Care Act, Judge Vinson has aligned himself with the 25 Republican Attorneys General and Governors who filed the case. Overreaching decisions and partisan rulings have no place in the court room. I am confident that the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act will prevail and that it is in the best interest of the American people."

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings represents Florida's 23rd Congressional district. He is a senior member of the House Rules Committee and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

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